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Viewing cable 06BEIRUT2440, TFLE01: SPEAKER BERRI SAYS HE IS WAITING FOR

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- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06BEIRUT2440**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BEIRUT2440	2006-07-22 14:09	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN	Embassy Beirut

Appears in these articles:

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VZCZCXRO8458
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ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 221409Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4736
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RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 002440

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/22/2016
TAGS: [IS](#) [LE](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: TFLE01: SPEAKER BERRI SAYS HE IS WAITING FOR

ISRAEL'S FINAL OFFER

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C/NF) In a July 22 meeting with the Ambassador and econoff, Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri recited the devastation Israeli military operations have caused to his native southern Lebanon. By contrast, Berri asserted that Israel has not exacted much damage on Hizballah's military wing, saying only eleven Hizballah fighters have been killed. Berri also asked for USG assistance in securing safe passage for 200 policemen and 300 civilians trapped in the Technical School in Bint Jbeil. Berri was in no hurry to discuss a cease-fire, saying he was waiting for Israel's bottom line final offer. He received word that Israel had rejected the UN proposal. Berri claimed he had not spoken to Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah since July 13, and he was not responsible for their cooperation. Musing about the war, Berri believed that Hizballah will emerge victorious, cease-fire or no cease-fire. If the fighting ends now, a largely intact Hizballah wins; if Israeli invades, the people, including Amal, will rally to the defense of Lebanon. End summary.

FIRST, LET'S SPEAK OF ISRAELI ATTACKS

¶2. (C/NF) On July 22, the Ambassador and econoff met with Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri and his foreign affairs adviser Ali Hamdan in the Speaker's house in Ayn el-Tinneh. Berri deflected political questions until he could work in his customary critique of Israeli actions. He produced a binder containing full-page, lurid, color pictures of civilian casualties in the fighting with Israel. Berri reported that there were 28 Israeli air raids on Khiam alone today. Villages in southern Lebanon are being "smashed". Next, Berri called in a grim-faced MP Ali Hassan Khalil to confirm the devastation in the south. Berri noted that all the construction work he did in southern Lebanon is now destroyed.

¶3. (C/NF) Berri said repeatedly that Israel is not causing any significant damage to Hizballah's military capabilities. He dismissed the Israeli claims that 100 Hizballah fighters have been killed thus far in the Israeli campaign. According to Amal's information, only eleven Hizballah fighters have been killed. Berri accused Israel of exaggerating the death toll by counting a Hizballah house destroyed as a dead Hizballah fighter. By this logic, Berri grinned ruefully, there must be 600 Amal members dead. You know, Berri explained, Israel is attacking a lot of Amal areas.

¶4. (C/NF) Berri then asked for USG assistance in the plight of some 200 policemen and 300 civilians trapped inside the Technical School of Bint Jbeil. He said that the UN is ready escort them out to Berri's hometown of Tibnin, but they need Israeli clearance. He asked that the USG obtain Israeli clearance for the technical school evacuation.

WAITING FOR ISRAEL'S FINAL OFFER

¶5. (C/NF) Following Berri's presentation on the impact of the Israeli military operation, he was curiously noncommittal about a cease-fire. He did not seem to be in a hurry to end the fighting. Berri simply said that, following his meetings with the UN peace team, he was waiting for Israel's final offer. He cannot engage the issue until he knows what Israel can and cannot accept. In any event, Berri heard from PM adviser Mohammad Chattah that Israel rejected Terje Roed-Larsen's proposal out of hand and said that it would win the war. Israel wanted a 20-40 km buffer zone, LAF deployment to the south, and no discussion of Lebanese

prisoners in Israel, according to Berri's sources. Berri then mentioned that shelling had come close to the UN team's vehicle in Gaza as if to imply Israel wanted to scare them off.

16. (C/NF) Berri claimed that he has not talked to Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah since July 13, nor does he want to. It is not easy anyways; it involves hours of waiting. Berri asserted he was not responsible for how Hizballah would respond to a cease-fire offer; or whether it would release the two Israeli soldiers it is holding. However, Berri did confirm that he was in contact with PM Siniora and was working with him on the crisis.

BERRI: HIZBALLAH
WINS EITHER WAY

17. (C/NF) Berri wondered how Israel can defeat Hizballah. Hizballah will win whether Israel continues the war or not. If the fighting stops now, Hizballah is victorious by virtue of surviving 10 days of Israeli attacks. And Hizballah can claim that the IDF was afraid to fight Hizballah on the ground. If Israel invades southern Lebanon, Hizballah will resist, and Amal armed men will fight along side them. And the people would fight Israel, not Hizballah. Berri claimed that there are currently four Amal fighters fighting along side Hizballah militiamen at Maroun al-Ras, the site of intense ground battles with the IDF. Berri also boasted that Amal security officers on July 21 captured a Lebanese Shia who was spying for Israeli intelligence. Amal turned the man over to army intelligence. Today's edition of the Arabic daily "As Safir" reported that the Israeli spy used special "paper" to mark buildings in the southern suburbs of Beirut that Israeli aircraft can detect and target. They may be one Hizballah member in the building, but perhaps 19 other innocent families as well. That is why so many civilians are killed, explained Berri.
FELTMAN